



Three Rocks Research
So that others may know ...SM

The Three Rocks Report

A Story

An Indian Village



This cattle pasture is the site of an ancient village. Native People lived here for hundreds of years before the arrival of Europeans.

In a small valley leading into the Vallecitos, not far from Idria, is an ancient village site where Native People made their home for many hundred years before the arrival of Spanish explorers. The village is near an abundant freshwater spring that lies on the boundary between the pine/oak forest and the open grassland of the valley. Except for a single early homestead, the village has been abandoned for probably 200 years. Nothing remains of the numerous houses that once populated this site, or even the adobe built here around 1850. All that is left are many bedrock mortars, a scatter of broken stone tools and several cupule-style petroglyphs.



The Native People prepared some of their food by grinding it in these mortars. This village contains many mortars, such as this one.

The numerous mortars, 48 counted so far, suggest that food was plentiful and that many people worked together processing food. Additionally, this location, at

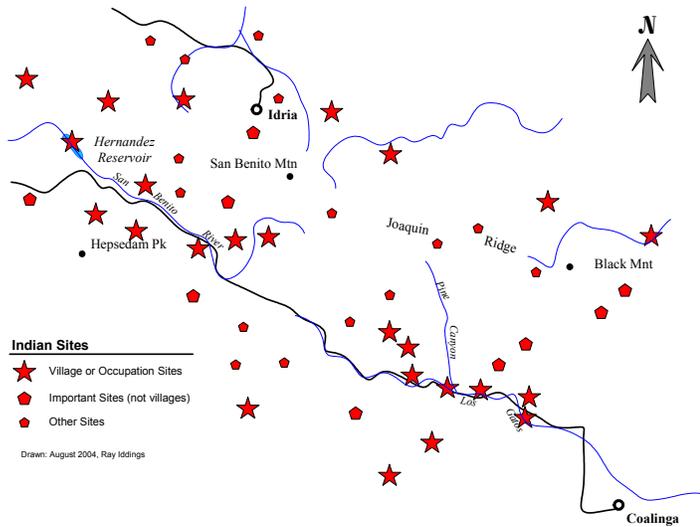
the forest/grassland boundary, is convenient for both foraging and hunting.

Deer and rabbit were hunted for food and clothing, but historical accounts also suggest that they hunted antelope, elk and even bear. This place also provided abundant seasonal crops such as pine nuts, manzanita berries, brodiaea, yucca, juniper and acorns. They may have caught crawdads in the stream and perhaps even salmon in the San Benito River a few miles south. Their territory may have included the Hernandez Valley where they annually pruned the Valley Oaks and burned the undergrowth to improve the already abundant crop of acorns.



This rock (3'x2') contains many eroded cupule petroglyphs, with the most prominent cupule in the center. Most of the many rocks at this village site contain cupule petroglyphs of this style. The purpose and meaning are unknown.

While we know something of the people who lived in this region, we know nothing of the families who made this home. It is unlikely that we will ever learn the name of this village, the names of the families who lived here, or even how many people lived here. Of course, this isn't the only ancient village site in the area, in fact, this region hosts many such places and the children of the families who lived here would have married into the families of other nearby villages in the Cantua, Los Gatos, Priest Valley and San Benito areas.



This map is a snapshot of how we see Native occupation of this region. The Native People occupied and used the land very different from our practice. Unlike our practice of building large cities and occupying a place for a very long time, the Native People moved their village several times during their life, and they might have several seasonal homes that they visited each year. Although the map shows several village sites, we don't know if these were occupied by different groups at the same time, or if they were created by a group living in one place for several months or years before moving to another place, in a cycle that took a few generations before repeating. We also don't know what caused them to move; was it the accumulation of trash, the death of an important elder, an increase in Grizzly Bears, or perhaps a major earthquake?

I sometimes wish I could hear their stories and understand their path, of course, that is not possible because the people have moved. Even the landscape has changed; the bear, elk and antelope are gone and many of their plants have vanished. Their spiritual and mystical places have also changed; the oil seeps and boiling sands are gone from Oil Canyon, Donut Rock has fallen, and their art has faded from the rocks ... and so we can never truly understand their path.

The Story Behind that Name

Erie

The name "Erie" is associated with the Erie school district, where the post office was located in the Hernandez Valley. Erie School opened in 1871. The school was named "Erie" by Adherbal Button; the word Erie is supposedly an Iroquois Indian word for "cat." Adherbal Button named it "Erie" because Erie, Pennsylvania was he and his wife's American hometown.

According to Jack James and Henry Carrillo, the school building was located near the junction of Coalinga Road and Clear Creek Road.

Postal authorities established Erie Post Office in 1874, moved it 1.5 miles northwest and changed the name to Hernandez in 1892. They moved it back in 1896, moved it again in 1904 (1 mile north), and closed the post office in 1936. The post office is shown on a 1891 McCray map on the north side of the San Benito River near the northwest confluence of Clear Creek and San Benito River.

From the *San Benito Advance*, April 21, 1877:

The Erie school house was destroyed by fire on Friday night of last week. It is supposed to have caught fire through the carelessness of campers who built a camp fire on the windward side of the building. The loss of building, desks, and library, is estimated at \$500. Mr. Azariah Martin, the teacher, and about 25 scholars are likely to have a vacation until a new school house is built.

Mr. Button says that 9 or 10 inches of rain have fallen during the season in Hernandez valley and throughout the Erie district, and more rain has fallen on the tops of the mountains. The Laguna ranch belonging to Green & Martin, is covered with feed.

From the *San Benito Advance*, July 26, 1877:

Miss Lou Wright, daughter of Captain Wright, has accepted an engagement to teach the Erie school.

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Pioneers and People

Trinidad Garcia

There were two unrelated Garcia families living in the Los Gatos/Priest Valley area in the latter 1800s. This issue has caused a lot of confusion while researching some of the family names and history of the area. (Editor's note: I hope that I am finally getting the story straightened out and that any mistakes will be quickly corrected by readers.)

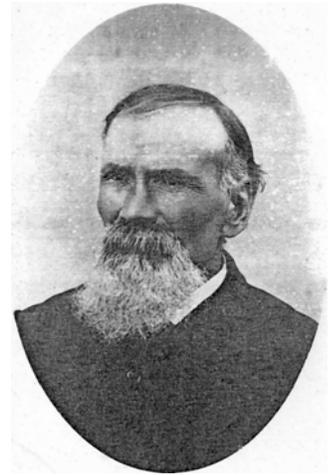
The headwaters of Los Gatos Creek run from Garcia Canyon, which is named for Trinidad Garcia who made his home near the mouth of the canyon. Trinidad was born May 5, 1846 in Lima, Peru. His parents, a Peruvian mother and a French father were killed during a revolution. Trinidad and his sister somehow came under the care of the *House of Garcia* in Texas and were brought to Santa Clara Mission in California by a priest. Trinidad was adopted by Sebastian Garcia and Julia Flores in Gilroy.

Trinidad married Ellen Williams, daughter of Benjamin Williams (*Three Rocks Report*, January, 2005). They had eight children together. Their marriage ended after Trinidad was caught having an affair. Trinidad told stories about furnishing fresh mounts to Joaquín Murietta - but his having met Joaquín Murietta is unlikely since he was seven years old when Murietta roamed the country. The other Garcia family, Joaquin Garcia, lived in Lewis Creek.

A Reader's Story

Joaquin Garcia

The following story was originally related by Romolo Bonifacio Garcia (1866-1947), the son of Joaquin Garcia. The story was mailed to *The Three Rocks Report* by Chancy Wooldridge, the great-great granddaughter of Joaquin Garcia's second daughter, Rosario.



Joaquin Garcia

In the fall of 1870 Joaquin Garcia and his family left the Merced River town of Snelling and headed south. They rode in a covered wagon with a band of cattle and horses along with hired men to lead the stock. At about Merced City they encountered the Southern Pacific Railroad construction and crossed ahead of work teams who were laying track in the San Joaquin Valley for the first time. They crossed the San Joaquin River at Mendota, just south of Kingston, on a ferry. They stayed the winter at a place called Liberty and traded at Kingston, which had horse races, a store, hotel, livery stables and a few dwelling houses.

Early in the spring of 1871 the family and live stock drove out north of Summit Lake and out on to the plains. Just going around the lake they passed 2 steamboats. These boats were used to travel up and down Lake Tulare and into Stockton. During this journey they also saw the government schooner, 3 wagons coupled together and drawn by eighteen mules that carried freight up and down the valley.

The family reached the west side of the valley at Alcalde Creek where Coalinga is today. The first night they camped at Alcalde they were awakened by an earthquake which made the cow bells ring. The next day they started up Alcalde Canyon and it took them two days to reach the Priest Valley.

This story was contributed by Chancy Wooldridge.

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